5-2013

Military Marital Relationships on Facebook: Associations Between Relational Maintenance Strategies, Relational Satisfaction, and Well-Being

Colleen Dungey
Clemson University, colleen.dungey@gmail.com

MILITARY MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS ON FACEBOOK: ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN RELATIONAL MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES, RELATIONAL SATISFACTION, AND WELL-BEING

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
Communication, Technology, and Society

---

by
Colleen Elizabeth Dungey
May 2013

Accepted by:
Dr. Joseph P. Mazer, Committee Chair
Dr. Karyn Ogata Jones
Dr. Darren Linvill

ABSTRACT

Despite the originality that long-distance relationships hold within the field of communication, military martial relationships (MMRs) are one type of long-distance relationship that remains to be thoroughly studied. The dedication that active duty members contribute to their country is often a hardship for martial relationships when faced with temporary separation. With advances in technology and the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook, individuals have the availability to communicate, regardless of distance. When faced with separation, individuals in MMRs encounter the difficulties of communicating to maintain their relationship. Facebook offers a unique medium to practice relational maintenance through the creation of profile pages that individuals in MMRs construct. During the time separation, Facebook gives individuals the ability to use this social networking site as a medium of communication to practice relational maintenance. This study sought to explore how social networking sites are not just to communicate but provide stability for relational satisfaction and well-being for individuals in MMRs. This study provides a preliminary look at how spouses use Facebook as a means of relational maintenance to ultimately experience relational satisfaction and overall well-being while their partner is temporarily away.

DEDICATION

For my Mom and Dad. Thank you for your encouragement and support that you gave me throughout my educational career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank many people for their support and encouragement during the writing of this thesis. This thesis would not have been possible without the encouragement, guidance, and support from my thesis advisor, Dr. Joseph Mazer. His advice and constructive criticism challenged me to become a better writer and kept me on track while developing this thesis. I want to give a special thanks to Dr. Mazer, whose guidance as a professor during my undergraduate program motivated me to pursue a degree in Communication Studies. And without his passion for teaching, I would not be here at Clemson University pursuing my Master's degree. I would also like to thank Dr. Darren Linvill and Dr. Karyn Ogata Jones for their input and assistance that brought different perspectives to help improve clarity and understanding of my thesis. I owe special thanks to my parents, especially my father for without him, I would not have had the opportunity to live the military lifestyle and may not have pursued this current topic of interest. I am also sincerely grateful for the support from my family and friends while I was pursuing my Master's degree. And lastly, I would like to thank my classmates. As a member of the inaugural class of the MACTS program, I am indebted to my classmates. Thank you for your encouragement and support. And I am sure we would all like to thank Pat O'Brien for giving us the opportunity to bond together as a cohort and give us many memories that we will never forget. We are CTS!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents (Continued)

Page

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Temporary separation from a loved one is a challenging hardship in any relationship. Both members in the relationship can encounter the obstacle of distance that becomes evident when having to be apart from each other. During the time of separation, the relationship experiences relational tensions and partners often must practice relational maintenance to hold together the bond. However, because relationships are often fettered by the essential of communication when the members of the relationship are separated they will have to identify ways to engage in relational maintenance.

One type of relationship that involves a form of temporary separation is a military marital relationship (MMR), where one or both partners have a military career. Hundreds or thousands of miles separate individuals in an MMR during military deployments, much like those involved in long-distance relationships (LDR). However, since the military career involves the unique stressor of repeated relocations, including international deployments, it involves frequent separation from family members (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). Furthermore, international relocation introduces the possibility of injury and/or fatality that families are challenged with which arises the uncertainty of safety and increases stress at the home front.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2007), "families have endured challenges and stressful conditions that are unprecedented in recent history, including unrelenting operational demands and recurring deployments in combat zones" (p. 4). The stressful conditions that result from a deployment are reported to have various

health effects on spouses (Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008). The health effects include stress, loneliness, sadness, emotional destabilization, depression, anxiety, and loss of emotional and social support (APA, 2007; Bell & Schumm, 1999; Faber et al., 2008). The stress that spouses and active duty members experience while deployed can have negative effects on relationship satisfaction.

Since family separation is practically unavoidable when one is involved in a military career, the separation becomes a concern for the individuals in an MMR. The effect of deployment on the family includes marital quality and relational satisfaction that are both affected in the instability of the relationship change (Schumm, Bell, & Gade, 2000). Due to the recurring deployments and experience of separation, military divorce rates are believed to be high (Linquist, 2007). However, it has been expressed that the data on military divorce rates are proved to be a simulated gap (Lindquist, 2007). According to Miles (2008), military divorce rates have risen by .1 percent to 3.4 percent during 2008. According to the Defense Department, these statistics have since risen to 3.7 by the end of fiscal year 2011 (Burton, 2012). Evidence of this rising statistic supports Gimbel and Booth's (1994) findings on how combat experience can harm marital relationships. Burton (2012) identifies the Defense Department's statistics on how there has been a steady increase of military divorce rates since the U.S. began operations in Afghanistan in 2001. Across 10 years, 2001-2011, the 1.1% increase in military divorce rates displays how deployments affect individuals in MMRs relational satisfaction. Over time, changes in marital satisfaction due to deployment may adversely affect relational

maintenance because of the amount of social change that individuals in MMR experience.

Upon deployment, individuals in an MMR begin to further experience relational dialectics. The stability of the relationship is at risk and technology is an essential form of communication that must be available to help the relationship withstand the distance, maintain relational satisfaction, and prevent the weakening quality of well-being among the deployed service members spouse (NMFA, 2005; Segal & Segal, 2003). Before the electronic (digital) age, and even still relevant to today, communication is a challenge that deployed soldiers and their family members face (NMFA, 2005; Segal & Segal, 2003). The forms of communication that have been available for individuals in an MMR throughout the past centuries include letters, telephone, e-mail, and video conferencing (Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999; Drummet et al., 2010; Segal & Segal, 2003). These communication channels are similar to those that are used to maintain LDRs (Dainton & Aylor, 2002). By incorporating these various forms of communication, relational partners are able to cope with the distance and maintain the relationship.

According to Merolla (2010b), limited and periodic communication between military romantic partners can cause personal and relational distress. The Internet has functioned as a fundamental aspect of interpersonal and social interaction since its introduction. Consequently, the introduction of social networking sites (SNSs) allows Internet users to connect with friends or persons of similar interests (Mannsson & Myers, 2011). The users that partake in Internet communication "must make explicit much of the

information that would be carried by the voice, gestures, or other non-verbal cues in face-to-face conversations" (Baym, 2006, p. 39).

The Internet as a fundamental tool for communicating makes it highly beneficial for "participants who are often temporally separated and do not share physical co-presence" (Baym, 2006, p. 39). For individuals in an MMR, the use of SNSs is a novel form of technology where there has been little to no study in the field of communication.

The introduction of SNSs gave members of the Internet the ability to connect, communicate, offer affection, support, and maintain relationships. Facebook, developed in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and initially intended for college students, has rapidly diversified and authorized membership for anyone with an e-mail account (Clark, Lee, & Boyer, 2007). According to Facebook (2013), as of December 2012 there were more than a billion monthly active users on Facebook. As stated on Facebook.com (2013), people utilize Facebook as a means to stay connected with family and friends and share and express themselves. Therefore, as a proven means of connecting and staying connected with family and friends, how Facebook can benefit individuals in MMRs will be examined. Studying Facebook offers the ability to explore how computer-mediated communication (CMC) benefits individuals in relationships that are maintained via distance. During separation due to a deployment/TDY, individuals who practice relational maintenance to maintain their relational satisfaction and well-being provide a context for exploration for this study.

Research has shown that advances in technology have made communication easier regardless of proximity (Baym, 2006). However, individuals in MMRs

communication may or may not be so easy to come in contact with (NFMA, 2004, 2005). Although the use of SNSs as a means of one-way communication is a missing element in research, this thesis will examine how military spouses practice online relational maintenance when face-to-face communication with their partner is impossible. With Facebook as a means of relational maintenance while the active duty member is deployed, the spouse has the ability to tolerate the distance and engage in online maintenance strategies to control the common health effects that have been reported to occur during deployment (APA, 2007; de Burgh, White, Fear, & Iversen, 2011; Faber et al., 2008; Padden, Connors, & Agazio, 2011; Warner, Appenzeller, Warner, & Grieger, 2009).

Relationship Dialectics

To fully understand the challenges that partners in a MMR experience through relational dialectics due to a temporary separation, it is important to clarify the characteristics of the relationship. After identifying the relationship, a brief overview of the theoretical framework will clarify its importance in this field of study.

A relationship is the "connection between two individuals that results in mutual interaction with the intent of achieving shared meaning" (Eichorn et al., 2008, p. 150). The mutual interaction between two individuals can vary in the degree of commitment whether it is friendship, intimate, marital, or family relationships (Eichorn et al., 2008). The interaction that takes between these individuals is represented like the game of "ping-pong." According to Regan (2011), the back and forth exchange of behavior influences each person in the relationship and affects the formed bond over time. The

interaction that takes place forms a specific bond between the individuals and the relationship type is identified.

The initial bond formed between both members in a MMR highlights the characteristics of a marital relationship. However, when the active duty member of the relationship is called for temporary relocation, the relationship faces the characteristics involved within an LDR. According to the APA (2007), "life within many military families is forever changed when a service member deploys" (p. 9). The military career endures the characteristics that employ relationship dialectics because during the time of separation, communication is often limited, which leads those in the relationship to engage through various means to maintain their relationship, one of many being technology. However, when communication is not available and partners in the relationship are unable to communicate, they are motivated to look towards other means of support to fill that temporary void.

The relational tension that coexists with the change upon temporary separation identifies the complex process that partners in MMRs are forced to transition through, from marital relationship to LDR. Through the relational dialectics perspective, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) found that relationships experience contradictions and become defined by negotiations of these contradictions. Relationship partners discover ongoing tensions and dilemmas throughout the relationship process. Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) work on relational dialectics opens a new perspective to studying MMR and offers an unique approach to the effects of temporary separation on the military spouses. For individuals in MMRs, the relationship is faced with the contradiction of negotiating

between stability and change. As introduced by Sahlstein, Maguire, and Timmerman (2009), relational dialectics is a theoretical framework that has been studied in personal and family relationships, but is yet to bring understanding to the challenges individuals in MMRs face.

This thesis will assess relational maintenance strategies that partners in a MMR utilize centered on the relational dialectic tension, contradiction. Montgomery and Baxter (1998) present contradiction as a "difference in some phenomenon over time" (p. 7). This definition lays the foundation for explaining how individuals in MMRs undergo the pattern of contradictions while experiencing temporary separation. Because contradiction encompasses the dialectic tensions, stability and instability, this contradiction in an MMR will become salient during those critical moments of separation (Rawlins, 1992). The change that partners in MMRs experience while being temporarily separated introduces the relational shift, which presents how individuals in the relationship adapt and engage in maintenance behaviors to promote increases in overall well-being and relationship satisfaction.

Effects of Well-Being due to Separation

During the time of separation, the individuals in MMRs experience strain due to the dialectical tensions that occurs. The spouse, the partner left behind, experiences a wide array of health effects that is a result of the separation. The health effects include stress, emotional distress, worry, anxiety, loneliness, and depression due to the loss of emotional and social support (APA, 2007; Bell & Schumm, 1999; Faber et al., 2008). Health effects, due to deployment, come in a wide array and are found to influence

relationship satisfaction. Therefore, by highlighting the health outcomes that occur during deployment, it is imperative to uncover how individuals in MMRs cope with the dialectical tensions and how spouses prevent these health effects from weakening their quality of well-being from becoming dissatisfying to the relationship bond.

Relational Maintenance with Facebook

The dialectic tensions that partners experience when required to be temporarily separated from one another is a challenge that plagues many military careers. When called to duty, partners in the MMR take the steps to become prepared for the relational switch from a marital relationship to a relationship that carries characteristics similar to an LDR. The essential form of communication is often impeded by the location of deployment, duration separated, and availability of technological means. In many cases, communication is periodic and limited making the steps to maintain the relationship a challenge (Merolla, 2010b).

Communication scholars studying relational maintenance have led their discussion to include various definitions of the term; however, the interaction between two people in a relationship is agreed to preserve and sustain the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Canary & Dainton, 2003; Montgomery, 1993). Because relational maintenance in this study is brought about by dialectics, the following definition will be used, "maintenance of a steady state is a definition of relational maintenance at odds with dialectic theory" (Dindia, 2003, p. 2). Understanding that partners in a relationship will always experience considerable amounts of change depending on the events, it is vital that the relationship can sustain and maintain the bond through the relational dialectics.

Military deployments and temporary separations are the defining experience for relational dialectics in MMRs. When partners in a MMR are separated from each other, the distance becomes a common stressor for both parties. In the event of dialectical tensions the couple strives to maintain its relationship through communication. Because of the relatively recent technological shift in communication, relational maintenance has conformed to the digital era of phones, computers, and videoconferences. As it was found for individuals in LDRs, the use of maintenance and strategies to aid in the success of sustainment in relationships is vital (Aylor, 2003). Individuals in LDRs have been found to use technology to communicate with the other partner due to their separation (Johnson, Haigh, Becker, Craig, & Wigley, 2008). Since LDRs are defined with the relational partners being geographical apart, and through this separation are found to be difficult to maintain, research will be closely related to the form of communication that individuals in MMRs use during deployment.

To maintain LDRs, researchers have found different methods to approach the social media aspect. As technology evolves, the rise of social media practices increase. Researchers in this area of study have gradually studied LDRs and how relational maintenance has changed with technology through time (NMFA, 2004). According to the National Military Family Association (NMFA) (2004, 2005) communication is essential for family members to ensure stability and support. Technological advances such as "phone, cell phone, fax, video calls and email" have made it easier and more efficient to connect with deployed service members (APA, 2007, p. 22). However, a survey conducted by the NMFA (2005) found 29% of respondents said that mid-deployment,

during the greatest time of stress, it was difficult to cope with the ongoing fear of the unknown whereabouts of their deployed spouse.

Therefore, with the ongoing advances in technology, this thesis will introduce another form of CMC that has been found to maintain relationships (Johnson et al., 2008). The social networking site (SNS) Facebook is a source of technology that spouses may look to when organized communication with their deployed spouse is impossible. Although relational maintenance scholars previously assumed that face-to-face (FtF) communication is necessary to maintain a relationship, for military families any means of communication is vital (Stafford, Kline, & Dimmick, 1999). Although Facebook as a means to help conceptualize relational maintenance is limited, it produces valuable information for individuals in MMRs and suggests that research should examine Facebook's potential for practicing relational maintenance strategies. Previous research examines Facebook as a means for maintaining preexisting relationships and developing relationships (Craig & Wright, 2012). Therefore, this study desires to examine Facebook as a medium of relational maintenance because it is a source of social networking and has the potential to maintain relationships (Facebook, 2013).

Relational maintenance research will be examined through the typologies of maintenance behavior that scholars have previously produced. Stafford and Canary's (1991) five-factor maintenance measure will be used to examine the individuals in MMRs maintenance strategies by way of Facebook to cope with the dialectical tensions and to control the common health effects that occur during deployment. Even though the pattern of maintenance behaviors are affected by the distance, the significant use of

Facebook may manage the dialectic tensions that arise. Relational maintenance research examines how the classes of behavior are used to repair, sustain, or enhance relational satisfaction, commitment, and stability (Canary and Dainton, 2006). The role of spouse's use of Facebook as a channel for relational maintenance offers potential for evidence on how maintenance behaviors are becoming more relevant to relationships where FtF interaction is a secondary form of communication.

Practicing Relational Maintenance in MMRs

Despite the originality that LDRs hold within the field of communication, MMRs are one type of LDR that remains to be thoroughly studied. A connection can be created between the research on relational dialectics and relational maintenance online that will lead to preserving relationship satisfaction and controlling the health effects of temporary separation. Relational dialectics explains the phenomenon of how dialectic tensions can occur while in an MMR. The process of managing dialectic and relational maintenance will help the spouse control the common health effects that occur during temporary separation.

While it is important to identify the unique challenges that both members of this MMR face, this thesis will explore how spouses experience separation when communication is difficult. However, as stated earlier, with the increase in members of the popular social media website Facebook, will this means of interactivity and communicative support help individuals in MMRs maintain their relationship during dialectic tensions of temporary separation? Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question:

RQ1: How does the practice of relational maintenance on Facebook affect relational satisfaction and the well-being of individuals in a MMR?

Through the connections of relational dialectics, health effects, and relational maintenance that spouses experience on Facebook as a means of maintenance via distance will help distinguish the vital role that SNSs can create for military families.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will explain how the practice of relational maintenance strategies on Facebook maintains relational satisfaction and preserves the well-being of military spouses. Because individuals in an MMR embrace concepts of relational dialectics, relational maintenance strategies are implemented. The relational maintenance strategies practiced by the individuals in an MMR likely increase their relational satisfaction and preserve their well-being. Before explaining the theoretical framework, the term MMR will be defined based on this study's purpose.

Defining Military Marital Relationships

Romantic relationships and long-distance relationships (LDR) combine to create an MMR. The characteristics of these relationship types can help characterize the essence of an MMR. With their qualities merged together, romantic and LDRs establish the creation of the MMR.

Romantic Relationships. VanderVoort and Duck (2000) pose the obvious question of "what is a relationship." People in relationships experience different levels of communication and commitment. As chapter one noted, a relationship is defined as the "connection between two individuals that results in mutual interaction with the intent of achieving shared meaning" (Eichorn et al., 2008, p. 150). There are different types of relationships that expand this definition in more detail, one of which is known as romantic or marital relationships. Marital relationships bond together two individuals and

are the most important "intimate relationship two people can share" (Turner & West, 2002, p. 232).

Two people who share an intimate relationship can be represented within the family structure as the husband and wife. However, the term family can be defined in at least two ways, family of procreation and family of origin (Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994). Family of procreation is understood to represent the immediate family including spouses, children, and siblings, while the family of origin is defined as relatives or the extended family (Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994). This study will focus on the family of procreation. While closely examining the partners in the family of procreation, the definition of romantic or marital relationships can be identified with the level of commitment.

The transition from romantic to marital relationship embraces the level of commitment that is necessary when creating a family (Eichorn et al., 2008). The term commitment is relevant to the success of a relationship that "refers to our desire to continue a relationship" (Eichorn et al., 2008, p. 182). For example, when individuals in a relationship are confronted with the possibility of distance, their commitment to the relationship is assessed when they both desire to continue the relationship long-distance.

Long-distance relationships. In some cases, romantic relationships may transition to LDRs. Individuals who do not live geographically near their partner demonstrate the notion of LDRs. Rohlfing (1995) contends that "the more separated persons are, the more difficult it is for them to communicate with each other, thus the less likely they are to try" (p. 173). Although the definition of what constitutes an LDR varies,

it is defined as individuals who live far enough away that it would be difficult to see them every day (Rohlfing, 1995). The geographical proximity of the relationship dictates that development and maintenance of the bond becomes more difficult and encourages making a commitment to communication.

Due to high commitment levels, geographically separated relationships face several difficulties that must be overcome and are vital to relationship satisfaction. One challenge that LDRs face is the difficulty to communicate via the obvious distance. As found in romantic and marital relationships, communication is an important necessity when becoming involved in, developing, or maintaining a relationship (Eichorn et al., 2008). When partners are faced with a large geographical distance, communication is used to maintain the relationship in order to prevent relational termination. Guldner (1992) identified that couples that lived 125 miles apart communicated through telephone once every 2.7 days and used handwritten letters. Compared to previous studies (Rohling, 1995), individuals in LDRs are using computer-mediated communication (CMC) to maintain their relationships, which is an improvement over telephone calls and now "historic" handwritten letters (Eichorn et al., 2008).

Gerstel and Gross's (1983, 1984) research on commuter marriages classifies the existence of relationships that are maintained via distance. Although their definition defines the individuals in the commuter couple as those "who set up separate residences and live apart at least three or four days per week," the characteristic of marriage takes precedent (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, pp. 181-182). A characteristic that should be refined, that represents commuter marriages, is the contrast between the separations being

involuntary and voluntary. Gerstel and Gross (1983) conclude that commuter marriages involve individuals who desire to maintain the bond but their career holds strong importance to them. However, an occupation where individuals in the relationship value a strong bond between career and family are those closely affiliated with the U.S. military (Merolla, 2010b). While individuals in an MMR are increasingly faced with becoming geographically separated due to the demands of their careers, they can be loosely associated with commuter marriages. Gerstel and Gross's (1983) classification of commuter marriages recognizes the separation to be voluntary. For individuals in an MMR, the active duty member is sometimes assigned deployments rather than volunteering for deployments. However, when committing to any military service they are accepting the challenge to honor and defend their country.

The temporary long-distance that this relationship type undergoes is an understudied example and must be examined to promote new approaches to LDR research. While considering the connections between LDRs and commuter marriages, the MMR will offer an example that is qualitatively different from previously researched LDRs.

Military Marital Relationships. An MMR embraces the characteristics found in both romantic relationships and LDRs. Understanding the unique characteristics of the MMR will be useful to conceptualize the difficulties the relationship faces during separation.

Individuals in an MMR experience the separation that is often identified with a LDR. Since military members are frequently assigned deployments or temporary duty

assignments (TDYs), the relationship weaves in and out of being geographically close and separate (Merolla, 2010a). Due to separation, spouses of military members are faced with the difficulty to communicate, as found within LDRs. Depending on the geographical locations of the assignments, communication through telephone, e-mail, and video-conferencing may not be available and often results in stress for the family (Faber et al., 2008).

A paucity of research on MMRs exists in the communication literature. However, the challenges that are experienced for the individuals in MMRs are often associated with similar attributes found in LDRs. Individuals in LDRs heavily rely on communication to maintain their relationship (Kim et al., 2005). As found within LDRs, individuals in MMRs value communication. However, individuals in an MMR face the absence and/or difficulty to communicate during deployment, making it more difficult to maintain the relationship. The defining factor for understanding MMRs is to recognize the hardships that arise due to the separation, the demands of coping with not only the time apart but also distance, and the uncertainty of when communication will happen.

Acknowledging the characteristic of uncertainty expresses the significance of stressors that are identifiable for many MMRs (Faber et al., 2008). It is important to understand that individuals in MMRs undergo a significant amount of stress during separation. Sahlstein et al. (2009) recognize the changes that occur with an MMR during wartime deployment. When two-way communication is unavailable during deployment, the spouses that have been left behind might struggle to maintain relational satisfaction and experience negative effects on their well-being. Finding ways to stay connected is a

constant struggle for individuals in an MMR. The adjustment period that individuals in MMRs undergo during separation suggests the presence of dialectical tensions.

It is an eminent fact that dialectical tensions are no stranger to MMRs. Spouses report that separation not only affects relational satisfaction and well-being, but distinguishes the importance of synchronous communication in a relationship. Through various means of communication, individuals in MMRs must adapt to the separation in order to preserve the relationship. However, with the absence of synchronous communication the effects of the dialectical tensions ignite a variety of strains that initiates the practice of relational maintenance.

The emphasis on tensions forms the basis of relational dialectics that are often experienced across relationships. MMRs become a prime example of relational dialectics due to the constant management of natural strains that come with adapting to separation. The subsequent section will outline relational dialectics as a theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

Change can be emotionally draining and lead to relationship dissatisfaction and poor well-being of individuals. Research on relationships has emphasized that contradictory forces between individuals in a relationship result in attempts to maintain a balanced relationship. Montgomery (1993) argues, "in order for relationships to survive, some minimal stability is necessary in partners' role relationships, agreements about relationship rules and general satisfaction" (p. 213). The introduction of stability identifies the relationship challenges that surround relational strains and affect satisfaction and emotional well-being.

Relational Dialectics. The idea that "relationships are not stable, consistent experiences of given dimensions or features" because of their "experiential variations from positive to negative, fluctuations resulting from mood or daily experience, and fluidity reflecting life's ups and downs" suggests the presence of dialectics (VanderVoort & Duck, 2000, p. 3). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) introduced this theory to shift the view of relationships and communication to where dialectical tensions are created and re-created through the relational partners interaction. Although Baxter and Montgomery (2000) report that "dialectics is not a theory in the traditional sense" (p. 32), because it lacks the structural criteria for a good theory presented by Kuhn (1977), it offers many theoretical perspectives of conceptual assumptions. The dialectic perspective instead describes conceptual assumptions of contradiction, change, praxis, and totality, and is recognized as a metatheoretical perspective (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, 2000).

The philosophical roots of relational dialectic theory trace back to both Eastern and Western cultures (Miller, 2005). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) combined the concepts of both cultures to produce their understanding of relational dialectics in which relationships have the ability to sustain through the inherent tensions recognized by a central concept known as contradictions. Influential theorist Bakhtin's work is widely recognized by Baxter and it enhanced her work by emphasizing that dialogue is significant to all stages of life (Miller, 2005). Through Bakhtin's (1981) work, Baxter (2004) acknowledged that the idea of tensions evolve in all aspects of social life, more specifically, in relationships. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) agree with Bakhtin by saying that "social life is an ongoing dynamic tension between forces of unity and

difference, order and disorder" (p. 26) which characterizes the central concept of relational dialectics, contradiction.

According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), the application of romantic relationships proposes that these types of relationships exist due to the persistent contradictions, the oppositional pulls that place pressure on the relational partners. Although these tensions can never be fully resolved, they introduce the ability to sustain and manage the relationship.

Dialectical tensions are defined as "the simultaneous presence of two relational forces that are interdependent and mutually negating," and therefore one cannot be understood without understanding the other (Montgomery, 1993, p. 207). Together the tensions are required to distinguish their effect and influence on any relationship. Including contradiction, three other tenets are essential to understanding dialectics: change, praxis, and totality (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Since change is inseparable from contradiction, for this study the term contradiction will be used to represent the features of dialectic change. While these shared assumptions of the dialectic perspective are applied to romantic relationships, they can be present in MMRs by connecting them with evidence found in LDRs.

The first tenet, *contradiction*, is identified as the "drivers" of change that occur in a relationship. This tenet is not only crucial to the foundation of this study but provides the building blocks of the process individuals in MMRs experience during separation. "The dynamic interplay between unified oppositions" distinguishes the existence of ongoing change during a relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8). By

encompassing dialectic change with contradiction, it emphasizes the periods of instability that can interrupt the stages of relational development, which can lead to relational dissatisfaction (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998).

While the first tenet holds foremost significance to this study, the second and third tenets are required to fully understand how the dialectical tensions occur and how to react. The second tenet, *praxis*, identifies people as actors that focus on the

> simultaneous subject-and-object nature of the human experience. Individuals both act and are acted on; their actions in the present are constrained and enabled by prior actions and function to create the conditions to which they will respond in the future. (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998, p. 9)

Therefore, the communicative choices and actions individuals make, because of relational dialectical tensions, will help predict future experiences. The third tenet, *totality*, indicates that contradictions are inseparable and cannot be studied in isolation. Recognizing that totality characterizes dialectic experience as a "knot" of contradictions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998; Miller, 2005) relational dialectic scholars assert that unity of tensions must be understood together.

A variety of dialectical tensions are identified in the context of personal relationships. The following relational contradictions have stood out in relational dialectics and will be applied to MMRs based on personal relationships. Altman (1993) explained how dialectics are experienced within the individual and society. The nature of this study recognizes the dialectic experiences within the individuals of the relationship.

Autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty represent

the dialectics that exist within the relationship interaction. Although many scholars (Altman, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Miller, 2005; Rawlins, 1992) have acknowledged the infinite amount of tensions that can be represent in relationships, the above dialectics will be applied. As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) acknowledge, internal dialectics can be experienced at all times, some more prominent than others, although simultaneously represented in relationships.

Autonomy-connection is central to relational contradictions and focuses on the dualistic nature of togetherness. Rawlins's (1992) study on friendship highlights the importance of the existence of this tension in all relationship types. As Miller (2005) concludes, this contradiction becomes known to relationships when individuals strive to maintain a separate identity while assimilating within the relationship. For MMRs, the desire to have a separate identity while being with their partner is in constant flux due to deployment. Gerstel and Gross's (1983, 1984) research on commuter marriages adds valuable information that ties to personal relationships and will aid in the exploration of the dialectical tensions that occur for MMRs. The difficulty that individuals in commuter marriages report involves the shift from autonomy to connection. During the time of deployment, individuals in an MMR express the difficulties of separation and how it forces independent identity to emerge while still yearning to be coupled with their spouse (APA, 2007; Faber et al., 2008).

Openness-closedness refers to the dualistic nature of exchanging information. As identified in personal relationships, the process of sharing personal information becomes a concern with how much information should be shared and whether or not it is the

appropriate time (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). According to military scholars (Merolla, 2010b; NMFA 2004, 2005), this tension becomes prominent for those individuals involved in MMRs due to the amount of information that is appropriate to communicate. The duality of this tension has the ability to create positive and negative effects that can either "create distractions that reduce his or her ability to focus on the mission" or present to the family member the sense of psychologically present but physically absent (APA, 2007, p. 22).

The last dialectical tension, *predictability-novelty*, also known as certainty-uncertainty, identifies the sense of reducing uncertainty or enhancement of predictability in the relationship (Miller, 2005). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) recognize that individuals in a relationship desire to be either completely unpredictable or uncertain. This dialectical tension makes the relational bond difficult to sustain. While it is found that predictability-novelty still occurs in commuter marriages, the current study asserts that this dialectic may become less prominent for individuals in an MMR (Gerstel & Gross, 1984). For individuals in MMRs, the sense of predictability and novelty is difficult to approach due to the nature of the separation. However, for individuals in an MMR, uncertainty or certainty of a reunion may become recognized as centers for stability and excitement that spouses may feel during separation.

Dialectical tensions are found in relationships that pull at individuals in the relationship. Internal dialectics have the potential to affect the individuals' experience in the relationship while having large effects on how the partners in the relationship interact. Because Baxter and Montgomery (1996) emphasized that the presence of dialectics might

change by relationship type, MMRs carry a unique situation that would make some dialectics more obvious. Due to separation, individuals in MMRs often experience the process of relational maintenance. However, because of partners' inabilities to manage the dialectical tensions to each other, partners may experience relational dissatisfaction and poor well-being.

Effects of Relational Dialectics on MMRs

Relational dialectics research identifies that relationships experience contradictions that influence and characterize the stability of their bond. A military family preparing for an approaching separation closely reflects the unique challenges recognized by relational dialectics (Sahlstein et al., 2009). Due to the limited and irregular communication between the individuals in a MMR, research has recognized effects on relational satisfaction (de Burgh et al., 2011; Drummet et al., 2003; Gimbel & Booth, 1994; Lundquist, 2007; McLedland, Sutton, & Schumm, 2008; Schumm, Bell, & Gade, 2000) and effects on well-being (APA, 2007; Faber et al., 2008). Relational dialectics as a foundation will lay the groundwork for how relational dissatisfaction and the negative effects of well-being become apparent for individuals in MMRs.

Relational Dissatisfaction. A good prediction of relational stability is relational satisfaction. Because MMRs are classified as both romantic and LDRs, research on relational dissatisfaction generated in this relationship embraces two relational qualities. Scholars Faulkner, Davey, and Davey (2005) uncover that individuals within a marriage are equally satisfied with their marriage, LDR scholars discover that distance negatively affects relational satisfaction (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Rohlfing, 1995; Stafford,

2005). Research on romantic relationships comes in many forms, encompassing "dual-career couples, single residence marriages […], military deployments, and incarceration" (Stafford, 2005, p. 39). These relationship types are appended by separation.

Segrin and Flora (2001) reported that married prison inmates and their spouses experience marital dissatisfaction. This study offers an innovative view on how geographic separation can be more than just careers, but a forced separation. Segrin and Flora (2001) discuss that companionship and communication are essential to marital quality and is absent for incarceration relationships. The researchers identify loneliness as an emotional stressor that arises from the lack of desired social interaction that affects satisfaction (Segrin & Flora, 2001). The geographical separation found in inmates correlates with MMRs.

Gerstel and Gross (1983, 1984) recognize that relational satisfaction in commuter marriages can be tampered with because of separation. Although individuals in commuter marriages separate and reunite frequently, the challenges are embedded in the adjustment periods after departure. Patterns of change in relationships acknowledge the presence of relational dialectics (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). Research on dialectical tensions in relationship patterns will provide an accurate assessment of their effect on relational satisfaction (Noller & Feeney, 2002).

Communication is an essential aspect of relationship quality. When patterns of communication are obstructed, individuals in relationships experience dissatisfaction (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005; Noller & Feeney, 2002; Stafford, 2005). In the case of individuals in an MMR, their patterns of communication can be affected by separation.

Research has shown that the stress of separation adversely affects the relational satisfaction experienced by individuals in MMRs.

There is no doubt that military families endure various types of stress due to separation. The adverse effects can impact all family members, including the spouse. Given the risks associated with deployments, the significant impact has been found to affect quality and satisfaction of the relationship (Burrell, Adams, Briley Durand, & Castro, 2006; de Burgh et al., 2011; Gimbel & Booth, 1994, McLeland et al., 2008; Schumm et al., 2000). Although research highlights that separation is an unavoidable component for military life, the type of assignment and lack of communication can faintly affect marital satisfaction.

First, it is important to recognize that research pertaining to the relational satisfaction experienced by individuals in MMRs has increased and its effect on MMRs could vary depending on the deployment assignment (Gimbel & Booth, 1994). Gimbel and Booth (1994) studied combat experiences on marital relations and found that "combat itself affects marital quality and stability" (p. 702). Alternatively, Schumm, Bell, and Gade's (2000) research considered how marital satisfaction is affected during peacekeeping deployments. The only significant change observed in marital satisfaction was pre-deployment and during deployment, where they concluded that if individuals in an MMR have a stable marriage before deployment, the marriage could survive without deteriorating relational satisfaction. McLeLand, Sutton, and Schumm (2008) observed "separation from loved ones might indeed affect close relationships and even reduce their satisfaction—not only during the separation, but both before and after the separation

period" (p. 840). Evidence found suggests that marital satisfaction becomes affected due to separation.

As noted in Chapter One, military divorce rates rose by .1 percent in 2008, recognizing the hardships military life imposes on relationships (Miles, 2008). However, it is not only the loss of each other's company that affects marital satisfaction, but also the lack of communication (NFMA, 2004, 2005). A second implication for marital dissatisfaction is lack of communication, more specifically synchronous. Segal and Segal (2003) reaffirm that despite the introduction of communication through the electronic (digital) age communication between spouses in an MMR continues to be a challenge. Spouses are sometimes faced with uncertainty when they are unsure when communication with their significant other will occur. The use of e-mail continues to be utilized (Stafford, Kline, & Dimmick, 1999); however, for one military spouse it is a "double edged sword, when it works it is great but when it doesn't work it causes stress" (NFMA, 2004, p. 11). When synchronous communication is unavailable, the use of other mediums are utilized. However, when those other mediums, such as e-mail, do not work, how do spouses remain connected with their partner and prevent relational dissatisfaction?

Well-Being. Changes tend to cause a multitude of emotion that result in various health outcomes (Karren, Hafen, Smith, & Frandsen, 2006). For military spouses the dialectic tensions that occur, due to relocation, amounts to numerous mental, physical, and psychological health outcomes. For many researchers, deployment is found to produce negative effects for those involved in a military lifestyle (APA, 2007; Bell &

Schumm, 1999; Bey, & Lange, 1974; Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005; Drummet et al., 2010; Faber et al., 2008; Padden et al., 2011; Segal & Segal, 2003; Warner et al., 2009). These negative effects hamper the well-being of not only the military family, but the spouses that are left behind.

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), coined by Dr. Robert Ader in 1964 defines how the brain affects the body's immune system (Karren et al., 2006). The connection between the mind and the body highlights a key component to the way spouses react to life changing events such as temporary deployment. The increased levels of stress due to deployment may lead to a crippling immune system and are recognized health effects in military spouses (de Burgh et al., 2011; Karren et al., 2006). The emotions felt during this life-changing event play a powerful role in how the body reacts to a "mixture of feelings and physical responses" (Karren et al., 2006, p. 12). The impact of deployment and loss of social support on spouses affects their well-being, which can include signs of stress, anxiety, and depression (APA, 2007; Bell & Schumm, 1999; Bey, & Lange, 1974; Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005; Drummet et al., 2010; Faber et al., 2008; Padden et al., 2011; Segal & Segal, 2003; Warner et al., 2009).

Stress. The definition of stress has evolved from many different forms relating to how some force from within stimulates strain on the emotional and physical makeup of an individual in a negative manner (Karren et al., 2006). Therefore, the impact of stress on health refers to "anything in the environment that causes us to adapt, and that 'stressful' situation can be either happy or sad" (p. 43). The use of this definition will

identify the unique factors of stress that spouses experience while their counterparts are temporarily unavailable to communicate.

Countless military studies have found that separation from family creates a stressful situation (APA, 2007; Bell & Schumm, 1999; Bey & Lange, 1974; Drummet et al., 2003; Padden et al., 2011; Warner et al., 2009). During this life-changing event, stress is caused by the "lack of control, communication problems, concern for service members' living conditions and safety, and lack of knowledge over the length of deployment" (Padden et al., 2011, p. 248). The absence of the active duty partner causes the spouse to experience many forms of stress. The general well-being of military spouses is a lesser-known impact of deployment in research that is slowly being recognized in scholarly work (de Burgh et al., 2011). However, the wider known health impacts of deployment stress encompass a variety of health outcomes recognized in today's research.

According to Faber et al. (2008), "spouses of military members have reported that deployment results in loss of emotional support, loneliness…" (p. 222). The stress that military spouses go through is psychosocial stress. Defined as stress that involves interpersonal relationships, psychosocial stress can occur when individuals feel a loss of social interaction (Karren et al., 2006). The psychosocial stress that spouses experience when being separated from their significant others occurs because the communication of everyday comforting messages is not always possible.

Anxiety. Stress can be linked to other implications of separation. The loss of social interaction with a loved one can produce the feeling of stress, especially for those individuals involved in MMRs. The fear and safety of the deployed service member plays

a major role for spouses and how they "attempt to cope mentally with [their] concerns and fears" of deployment location (Karren et al., 2006, p. 173). The rise in uncertainty emerges when the location of deployment is void and communication complications arise (Warner et al., 2009). When excessive worrying exists for a long period of time, anxiety develops. Spouses in MMRs are faced with the ambiguity of how long their partner will be deployed, where they are located, and their communication abilities for an extended amount of time which results in continuous worry, also known as anxiety (APA, 2007; Bell & Schumm, 1999; Burrell et al., 2006; deBurgh et al., 2011; NMFA, 2004, 2005; Padden et al., 2011).

Depression. The psychological impact of separation on military spouses is a challenge that takes a toll on their well-being. Depression, a change in normal life consistency, is attributed to the dialectical tensions that occur during deployment (Karren et al., 2006; Verdeli et al., 2011). Additionally, increased depression in military spouses is associated with longer or multiple deployments. The interaction of dialectical tensions and the increased level of stress due to uncertainty can often lead to feeling hopeless and relationally dissatisfied.

Verdeli et al. (2011) contributed to psychological research by examining the role of depression in military spouses. It is emphasized that spouses are strained with the adjustment period that occur during the deployment cycle. When individuals in an MMR adjust between togetherness and separation they experience an element of tension. This experience produces a feeling of sadness that affects spouses' mental health and leads to the psychological issue of depression. Each of the aforementioned health issues become

interrelated and surround the notion of disintegrating spouses' well-being during separation.

The above health findings due to relational separation, caused by deployment, do not represent an exhaustive list. While research identifies numerous psychological effects of separation, the aforementioned stressors have become prominent symptoms for military families (APA, 2007; Faber et al., 2008; Warner et al., 2009). Although not all spouses of military members have experienced the above stressors, it is important to recognize the common side effects of separation. The well-being of spouses' will be measured as an indication of the challenges spouses are faced with due to separation. This study aspires to determine how each of these implications impairs spouses' overall well-being during separation. The amount of stress that results from separation suggests a solution to maintain the well-being of spouses.

The amount of change that individuals in an MMR undergo has the ability to be managed with the advancement of technology. Research in relational maintenance has neglected the influence of SNSs. Due to relational dialectics, the introduction of tensions, stability and change, indicate a continuous state of relational strains that cannot be resolved but managed (Baxter & Simon, 1993; Montgomery, 1993). Therefore, the dialectical tensions that arise within relationships will focus on managing the oppositional forces. In order to manage the dialectical tensions, relational maintenance efforts (Baxter & Simon, 1993) must be enacted to preserve relational satisfaction and maintain spouses' well-being.

Relational Maintenance

The ability to manage a relationship is typically conceived as a process that sustains a relationship from diverging. Various scholars define relational maintenance in a number of ways, all of which encompass similar characteristics related to the ability to sustain, repair, and/or stabilize relational satisfaction (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dindia & Canary, 1993). Relational maintenance is defined as the process through which people in relationships make adjustments by engaging in maintenance behaviors to sustain "the nature of the relationship to the actor's satisfaction" (Stafford & Canary, 1991, p. 220).

Maintenance scholar Stafford (2005) recognizes how communication strategies may be used to manage dialectical tensions:

> Dialectical dilemmas are evident. All involved must balance independence with connection and stability with change. In addition, positive distortions may contribute to relational maintenance, but when expectations diverge too far from the reality encountered on reunion, dissatisfaction inevitably follows. (p. 52).

The notion that two opposing forces have the ability to influence relationships links the work of dialectic and relational maintenance scholars. The dialectical tensions constantly challenge individuals in the relationship due to their opposing forces that hold together and pull couples apart (Dindia, 2000). To achieve stability and maintain relational satisfaction, those involved in the relationship must engage in relational maintenance behaviors.

Relational maintenance scholars have classified various maintenance behavior strategies used to maintain relationships (Dindia, 2000; Stafford & Canary, 1991).

Stafford and Canary (1991) identified five primary relational maintenance strategies that are well known in relational maintenance scholarship: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and sharing tasks. *Positivity* is recognized by the interaction between partners in a positive and cheerful manner. *Openness* indicates the amount of open discussion or self-disclosure about the relationship. *Assurance* comprises of messages that stress commitment, demonstrate love, and faithfulness in the relationship. *Network*, also known as social networks, refers to the interaction or spending time with the partners in the relationship. And finally, *sharing tasks,* demonstrates how the individuals in the relationships share household tasks. Acknowledging that more intricate typologies exist (e.g. Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000), relational maintenance strategies aim to sustain relational satisfaction. Due to the limited research of relational maintenance during military deployment this research desires to understand the role of separation on the relational maintenance process.

Stafford (2005) emphasizes the lack of relational maintenance research in LDRs that reinforces the significance of face-to-face communication on the process of relational maintenance. Dainton and Aylor's (2001) research on LDRs conclude how relational maintenance strategies positively affect relational satisfaction. Through mediated communication, individuals in a relationship can enact maintenance strategies and communicate social support regardless of proximity. Even though Dainton and Aylor (2001) found that distance could encourage some forms of maintenance to occur while

obstructing others, the use of relational maintenance strategies is still asserted by the relationship (Aylor, 2003).

Offline vs. Online. As relationships evolved through time, the way in which the individuals developed them followed suit. In recent years relationship research has adapted and conformed to the digital age. Baym (2010) reports how the Internet enables endless possibilities to build relationships online. With personal relationships building online, it creates the question of how individuals in these relationships are able to strengthen and communicate with each other to sustain the bond that was developed. The mediated switch of relational development from offline to online allowed for relational maintenance scholars to do the same. Today, the term relational maintenance derived by Canary and Stafford (1991) is now an accepted term that incorporates both offline and online forms. Baym (2010) reported that in 2008 SNSs were "mainstream sites" of relational maintenance for relationships that were already built (p. 135). Since MMRs are relationships that are already built, the process of relational maintenance online creates a venue for communication within the relationship, especially when approached with a separation. As SNSs continue to make an impact on the process of relational maintenance Baym (2010) recognizes the presence of dialectics:

> New forms of mediation are disruptive in consistent ways throughout history. […] By transcending space, they enable us to connect with people who are not physically with us. Our bodies can be in one environment, yet our thoughts, feelings, and selves with someone elsewhere, positioning the body against the mind in a dualism that philosophers have been mulling for centuries. (p. 154)

The notion of communication transitioning from offline to online forms of mediation introduces the ability to connect with people regardless of proximity. As Baym (2010) acknowledges, the relational dialectics experienced in the digital age exposes this research to a new dynamic.

As found within MMRs, communication between individuals in the relationship is limited and sporadic, especially depending on the location of deployment (Merolla, 2010b). A unique component of SNSs is its ability for users to exchange messages through asynchronous communication (Baym, 2010). When communicating in any type of relationship that is separated by distance, communication constructed on SNSs offers a sense of connection that simultaneously offers relational maintenance. When individuals in relationships use the Interne, this not only enhances their relational bond, but also gives individuals access to a range of resources that offer "affection, advice, and support" (Baym, 2010, p. 136). Limited research on media use recognizes the significant effects that SNSs, specifically Facebook, have on relationships (Clark et al., 2007; Mansson & Myers, 2011; Utz & Beukeboom, 2011) and more exclusively on the behaviors used in order to maintain the relationship (Craig & Wright, 2012).

Facebook as Online Relational Maintenance. The Internet has become a fundamental aspect of interpersonal and social interaction. Consequently, the social effects of the Internet have had conflicting effects on personal relationships (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). However, the introduction of SNSs allows Internet users to connect with friends, or persons of similar interests (Mannsson & Myers, 2011). The users that partake in Internet communication "must make explicit much of the information that

would be carried by the voice, gestures, or other non-verbal cues in face-to-face conversations" (Baym, 2006, p. 39). Overall, evidence suggests that by communicating over the Internet, relationships with close ties are maintained. Recent research has attracted scholars to examine the effects of both relational development and maintenance while using SNSs (Baym, 2006; Chang, 2003; Clark et al., 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008), and few have looked closely at Facebook and the process of relational maintenance (Craig & Wright, 2012).

SNSs offer new possibilities for individuals to develop and maintain relationships. Having the ability to maintain relationships with the use of CMC adds significant value to what it means to maintain LDRs (Baym, 2006; Rabby & Walther, 2003; Wright, 2004). Stafford, Kline, and Dimmick (1999) discovered significant relational satisfaction in users of e-mail where users reported receiving support and increased connections with their personal relationships. Significant research on individuals in LDRs use of CMC determines that maintenance behaviors are just as significant to maintaining the bond (Rabby & Walther, 2003). Regardless of proximity, the process of relational maintenance is a phenomenon that has continued to shift across novel forms of CMC.

Recent studies (Craig & Wright, 2012; Ellison et al., 2007) have established research on the process of relational maintenance through Facebook. Although this research is limited, it provides a basis to this study. Clark, Lee, and Boyer (2007) conducted an exploratory study of college students' uses of Facebook and found a variety of functions that this culture participates in; communicating, updating themselves daily

on friends, sharing information, and posting pictures. Based on their findings, Facebook is "necessary when maintaining friendships with those who are some distance away" (Clark et al., 2007, p. 15). In the case of the current study, individuals in MMRs seek ways to communicate while separated, and the increasing popularity of Facebook as a context for maintenance can lead to greater relational satisfaction.

However, when using SNSs to obtain support, individuals are often confronted with communication challenges (Wright et al., 2007). According to Braithwaite, Waldon, and Finn (1999), because of the lack of nonverbal cues on the Internet and/or SNSs, communication is more inclined to misunderstanding. Due to limited body movement and auditory communication, visualization through text and pictures takes the forefront and becomes a prominent form for interaction for individuals.

Facebook offers a variety of features that allow users to interact with their "friends." These features are visual to the individuals and allow them to share and interact with their connected friends through photos, wall posts, private messages, instant messaging, and a "news feed" that shares real-time information about their friends' activities (Mansson & Myers, 2011). The many functions of Facebook create a place where spouses of individuals in MMRs have a place to remember interactions, photos and conversations that they shared with their significant other. The significant use of CMC lies within the convenience it carries. Facebook conveys to be a meaningful tool where communication can take place. Facebook as a process where relational maintenance takes place will be found to be an appreciated medium of communication for MMRs.

The significant amount of Internet traffic encourages the existence of relational maintenance behaviors online. An emphasis on the advantages of e-mail infers the convenience that asynchronous communication offers to LDRs (Rabby & Walther, 2003; Stafford et al., 1999). As technology and communication branch out to the latest form of SNSs, such as Facebook, it offers focus for this study: how individuals in MMRs practice relational maintenance and how those maintenance behaviors affect relational satisfaction and well-being.

Research has shown that because of advances in technology, communication has been made easier regardless of proximity (Baym, 2006). Facebook as a medium where individuals are able to maintain their relational bonds is a prevailing component in relationship research. Because individuals in MMRs experience dialectical tensions due to separation, this study will focus on how those individuals use Facebook to prevent relational dissatisfaction and the aforementioned health outcomes.

The challenges individuals in MMRs exhibit due to separation suggest the practice of relational maintenance strategies to maintain their relationship. Although Canary and Stafford's (1991) relational maintenance strategies have been studied with regards to relationships in deployment situations (Kim et al., 2005), the application to relational maintenance online must still be addressed. Individuals in an MMR rely on communication to maintain their relationship while apart. When communication complications arise, it makes relational maintenance a more difficult task and may result in relational dissatisfaction and poor well-being. Therefore, this study proposes the

following research question to identify the frequent use of relational maintenance strategies:

RQ: What relational maintenance strategies are most frequently used on Facebook to maintain MMRs?

This study also proposes the following hypotheses to explore the effects of relational maintenance strategies via Facebook on individuals in MMRs:

H1: Individuals in MMRs who engage in relational maintenance strategies more frequently on Facebook will report higher levels of relational satisfaction.

H2: Individuals in MMRs who engage in relational maintenance strategies more frequently on Facebook will report more positive levels of well-being.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Participants

One hundred and twenty-three military affiliated individuals in MMRs participated in this study. After reviewing the collected data it was discovered that many participants did not meet the primary requirements for the study. Eligible participants requirements were: (1) a military spouse or active duty member, (2) both individuals in the MMR were members of Facebook, and (3) experienced some time of separation from each other due to either a deployment or temporary duty assignment (TDY). In all, 73 participants took part in the study after ineligible participants were deleted.

The sample consisted of 57 females and 16 males with an age range from 19 to 46. The mean age of total participants was 29 years. Of the total participants, 69 percent were spouses of active duty ($N = 50$) and 31 percent were active duty ($N = 22$), with one participant choosing not to disclose this information ($N = 1$). Nearly half of the participants were affiliated with the Air Force ($N = 36$), while the remaining participants were affiliated with the Army ($N = 25$), Coast Guard ($N = 1$), Marines ($N = 6$), Navy ($N = 4$), and one participant chose not to specify ($N = 1$). Of the individuals that participated in the survey, 22 reported recently being involved in an extended TDY and 49 reported being involved in a deployment, with two individuals choosing not to provide information. The locations of the extended TDYs and deployments included the following: the continental United States (CONUS) ($N = 20$), Central Command (CENTCOM) ($N = 35$), European Command (EUCOM) ($N = 3$), Pacific Command

(PACOM) (N = 6), South American Command (SOUTHCOM) (N = 3), African Command (AFRICACOM) (N = 3), and some individuals reported other, including outside of the contiguous United States, and submarine (N = 2), with one participant choosing not to disclose information (N = 1). The eligible participants reported being members of Facebook and the average length of membership on Facebook was 5.86 years, with a range from 3 to 10 years.

Procedure

Following IRB approval, the questionnaire was distributed through snowball/network sampling. The participants received a link to the online questionnaire by e-mail or access through Facebook posts (See Appendix C for survey questions). Survey participants and their responses were anonymous. The initial survey invitations were sent to the researcher's family and friends who had contacts with other eligible participants for this study (See Appendix A for letter sent with link to online questionnaire). All participants indicated informed consent (See Appendix B for informed consent) by actively choosing to participate in the survey and by reading an online informed consent form. Participants were required to choose the best possible answer and had the ability to leave the survey at any time.

Measurement

Several items were used to assess the significance of the practice of relational maintenance via Facebook on relational satisfaction and well-being of spouses. The questionnaire measured demographic information, relational maintenance strategies, relational satisfaction, and well-being. The questionnaire consisted of three established

scales: (1) Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure (RMSM), (2) ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS), and (3) Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21). Before concluding the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide basic demographic information.

Relational maintenance was measured using the Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure (RMSM). Developed by Stafford and Canary (1991) to report maintenance behaviors practiced by individuals in a relationship, this scale incorporates five maintenance strategies: positivity, openness, assurance, social networks, and shared tasks. Participants were asked to report their experience on Facebook during a time of deployment or separation. The scale was used to measure the most frequent relational maintenance strategies individuals in MMRs practiced while on Facebook. The 29-item scale asked participants to report each item using a 1 to 7 Likert-type scale including 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=neither agree or disagree, 5=somewhat agree, 6=agree, and 7= strongly agree.

For this study the RMSM was evaluated for reliability and yielded the following Chronbach alpha levels: positivity .87 (M = 5.83, SD = .79), openness .93 (M = 4.92, SD = 1.61), assurance .76 (M = 6.21, SD = .97), social networks .89 (M = 5.50, SD = 1.23), and shared tasks .96 (M = 5.95, SD = 1.17).

Marital satisfaction was measured using the ENRICH Martial Satisfaction (EMS) Scale. EMS is a 15-item scale which contains two subscales, idealistic distortion and marital satisfaction, found in the ENRICH Inventory. Fournier, Olson, and Druckman (1983) developed the ENRICH Inventory that includes a 12-category scale measuring

marital satisfaction. However, it is suggested that the EMS Scale provides a strong measure of marital satisfaction by incorporating two scales from the ENRICH Inventory: Idealistic Distortion and Marital Satisfaction. In this study, participants were asked to report their marital satisfaction during the most recent assignment using the 15-item EMS Scale by using a 1 to 5 Likert scale with the following response options: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

According to Fowers and Olson (1993), the EMS Scale was found to be reliable and have strong associations with various measures of marital satisfaction making it a concise scale for this study. Fournier et al. (1983) determined that the full ENRICH Inventory would provide a 12-category scale measuring: Idealistic Distortion, Marital Satisfaction, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, and Religious Orientation. However, when Fournier et al. (1983) recognized 10 dimensions of marital satisfaction to be most important when indicating marital satisfaction the EMS Scale emerged. This scale includes a one-item sampling of the 10 dimensions of martial satisfaction and five dimensions of idealistic distortion. In Fowers and Olson's (1993) study, the EMS Scale revealed an internal reliability level of .86. Recognizing that the EMS Scale "may not meet the extreme demands for brevity, the length does offer a compromise between the need for a brief measure and a strong reliable and informative one" (Fowers & Olson, 1993, p. 184). In this study, the EMS Scale achieved an alpha level of .83 (M = 4.01, SD = .56).

Participants' well-being was measured using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale

(DASS-21). The DASS-21 is a shorter version of the DASS that was developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). The original DASS consisted of a 42-item report measuring three dimensions: depression, anxiety, and stress. Because DASS-21 is a 21-item report measuring the three dimensions only seven items pertain to each depression, anxiety, and stress rather than the original 14 items. Furthermore, before analyzing the data the reported scores must be multiplied by 2 in order to be directly compared to full-scale scores. Individuals were asked to report using a 4-point severity/frequency scale with response options including: 0 = did not apply to me at all, 1 = applied to me to some degree, or some of the time, 2 = applied to me to a considerable agree, or good part of time, 3 = applied to me very much, or most of the time.

According to Henry and Crawford (2005), the DASS-21 is shown to possess adequate construct validity. With an alpha level of .93, DASS-21 is a substantial scale that contains high reliability (Henry & Crawford, 2005). As Henry and Crawford (2005) stated, DASS-21 "is shorter and, hence, more acceptable for clients with limited concentration, and yet still possesses adequate reliability" (p. 238). Although DASS is a measurement used highly within clinical studies, DASS is appropriate to measure and analyze in non-clinical studies. In this study, the overall alpha level for the DASS-21 was .83 and individual dimensions alpha levels were: depression .85 (M = 6.23, SD = 6.64), anxiety .85 (M = 5.57, SD = 7.65), and stress .87 (M = 11.57, SD = 9.47).

Before concluding the questionnaire the respondents were asked to respond to basic demographic questions regarding age, gender, role in the relationship, affiliation with which branch of the military, the most recent type of assignment (extended TDY or

deployment), and the location of the most recent assignment. In regards to Facebook, the final question in the demographic section asked how long the individuals in the MMR have been members of Facebook.

Data Analysis

Pearson correlations were conducted and descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS to test the hypotheses and answer the research question. Alpha was set at .05.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter provides the overall results for the aforementioned hypotheses and research questions, and a post hoc analysis . The results will address how the relational maintenance strategies practiced on Facebook affected both relational satisfaction and well-being of individuals in the MMR.

Hypotheses

Refer to Table 1 for means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations between all variables in this study. Hypothesis 1 predicted that individuals in MMRs who engage in relational maintenance strategies more frequently on Facebook would report higher levels of relational satisfaction. A Pearson correlation revealed that the following strategies hold a significant positive relationship with greater relational satisfaction: positivity ($r = .38$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .14$), assurance ($r = .31$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .10$), social network ($r = .42$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .18$), and shared tasks ($r = .29$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .08$). The analysis revealed no significant relationship between openness ($r = .21$, $p > .05$, $R^2 = .04$) and relational satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that individuals in MMRs who engage in relational maintenance strategies more frequently on Facebook would report higher levels of well-being. A Pearson correlation indicated a negative relationship between the well-being dimensions depression, anxiety, and stress and the following relational maintenance strategies: positivity, openness, assurance, social networks, and shared tasks. A Pearson correlation failed to reveal a significant association between the relational maintenance

strategy positivity and depression (r = .11, p > .05, R^2 = .01), anxiety (r = -.15, p > .05, R^2 = .02) and stress (r = -.12, p > .05, R^2 = .01). The analysis failed to reveal a significant relationship between the relational maintenance strategy assurance and depression (r = .03, p > .05, R^2 = .00), anxiety (r = -.20, p > .05, R^2 = .04), and stress (r = -.16, p > .05, R^2 = .03). A Pearson correlation also failed to reveal a significant relationship between the social network relational maintenance strategy and depression (r = .20, p > .05, R^2 = .04), anxiety (r = .01, p > .05, R^2 = .00), and stress (r = .11, p > .05, R^2 = .01) and also failed to reveal significance between shared task and the following dimensions of well-being: depression (r = -.12, p > .05, R^2 = .01), anxiety (r = -.20, p > .05, R^2 = .04), and stress (r = -.17, p > .05, R^2 = .03). A Pearson correlation revealed a significant and negative relationship between openness and stress (r = -.28, p < .05, R^2 = .08); however the analysis failed to reveal a significant relationship between openness and depression (r = -.20, p > .05, R^2 = .04) and anxiety (r = -.17, p > .05, R^2 = .03). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

When evaluating the associations between relational maintenance strategies and well-being, the relationship between positivity and depression (r = .11, p > .05, R^2 = .01), assurance and depression (r = .03, p > .05, R^2 = .00), social network and depression (r = .20, p > .05, R^2 = .04), social network and anxiety (r = .01, p > .05, R^2 = .00), and social network and stress (r = .11, p > .05, R^2 = .01) were not significant. However, the relationship was in the direction predicted. The next chapter will provide further explanation of this relationship and assess the results addressed in this chapter.

Research Question

The research question asked what relational maintenance strategies were most frequently used on Facebook to maintain MMRs. An evaluation of the relational maintenance strategies participants practiced while on Facebook revealed the following: positivity ($M = 5.83$, $SD = .79$), openness ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 1.61$), assurance ($M = 6.21$, $SD = .97$), social networks ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.23$), and shared tasks ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 1.17$). According to the arithmetic means, assurance, shared tasks, and positivity emerged as the three most frequent relational maintenance strategies individuals in MMRs practiced on Facebook. Social networks and openness were the least practiced relational maintenance strategies by individuals in MMRs.

Post Hoc

Given the relationship between relational maintenance strategies, relational satisfaction, and well-being one final analysis seemed appropriate. The post hoc analysis was conducted to uncover a possible relationship between relational satisfaction and well-being. A Pearson correlation revealed significant relationships between relational satisfaction and the well-being dimensions of depression ($r = .36$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .13$) and stress ($r = .28$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .08$). The Pearson correlation failed to reveal a significant relationship between relational satisfaction and anxiety ($r = .08$, $p > .05$, $R^2 = .00$). In the following chapter, an in-depth discussion of the results, limitations to the current study, and directions for future research will be discussed.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations for all Variables

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Positivity	5.83	0.79	-								
2. Openness	4.92	1.61		-							
3. Assurance	6.21	0.97			-						
4. Social Networks	5.50	1.23				-					
5. Shared Tasks	5.95	1.17					-				
6. Marital Satisfaction	4.01	0.56	0.38**	0.21	0.31*	0.42**	0.29*	-			
7. Depression	6.23	6.64	0.11	-0.20	0.03	0.20	-0.12	.36**	-		
8. Anxiety	5.57	7.65	-0.15	-0.17	-0.20	0.01	-0.20	.08		-	
9. Stress	11.57	9.47	-0.12	-0.28*	-0.16	0.11	-0.17	.28*			-

* $p < .05$
** $p < .001$

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The primary objectives of this study were to explore the practice of relational maintenance strategies on Facebook and how such strategies affected individuals overall relational satisfaction and well-being in MMRs. Even though this study generated a small number of participants, the hypothesis concerning maintenance strategies and relational satisfaction was empirically supported. The hypothesis proposing an association between relational maintenance strategies and well-being was not supported but produced information that may be valuable for individuals in MMRs. These findings will be discussed further, including theoretical implications and practical implications for individuals in MMRs to consider as they seek to maintain their relationships.

Theoretical Implications

The study of Facebook as a medium to practice relational maintenance is an understudied concept within communication research (Craig & Wright, 2012). Consequently, this study produced valuable information for individuals in MMRs. Due to the absence of research surrounding relational maintenance on Facebook for individuals in MMRs, much of the discussion will be related back to relational maintenance through computer-mediated communication (CMC) and long-distance relationships (LDR).

The research question asked what relational maintenance strategies were most frequently used on Facebook to maintain MMRs. Ranked in the order of most frequently practiced relational maintenance strategies on Facebook, individuals in MMRs reported the following: assurance, shared tasks, positivity, social network, and openness. First,

individuals in MMRs revealed that the most frequent strategy practiced on Facebook was assurance. The exchanging of messages of love and affection between individuals in MMRs is shown to be important when separated (Kim et al., 2005; NFMA, 2004, 2005), a finding consistent with individuals in LDRs (Aylor, 2003). Second, participants reported that practicing the relational maintenance strategy of shared task was nearly as important as assurance. The results provided information that individuals in MMRs are performing responsibilities together via Facebook, regardless of the physical separation. This may indicate that individuals in MMRs have the ability to accomplish and manage some daily tasks together through Facebook that are normally performed together in a face-to-face (FtF) interaction (Kim et. al., 2005). The third most frequent strategy, positivity, indicates that individuals in MMRs are interacting with their partner in an optimistic manner on Facebook (Canary & Stafford, 1922). The positive, enjoyable, and noncritical behavior of the messages shared on Facebook might demonstrate why individuals in MMRs practice this relational maintenance strategy just as much as assurance and shared tasks. The fourth most frequent strategy, network, suggests that the participants may engage in communicating with family and friends on Facebook. The participants' responses could suggest that these interactions and/or support from family and friends may help numb the presence of the separation from their spouse (NFMA, 2004, 2005), which is why this relational maintenance strategy is practiced. The least frequent strategy practiced on Facebook, openness, indicates that the individuals in MMRs avoid the discussion of their personal relationship with their partner in a public setting such as Facebook. As Dainton and Aylor (2002) discuss, the nature and sensitivity

of discussing the personal relationship are better suited for synchronous communication (e.g., telephone, or FtF) rather than the asynchronous communication that is found on Facebook. This may suggest that individuals are more prone to disclosing this topic in a more private manner, explaining why this relational maintenance strategy was not used as frequent.

Marital Satisfaction. The hypothesis proposing an association between relational maintenance strategies practiced on Facebook and relational satisfaction was supported. Individuals in MMRs reported that by practicing positivity, assurance, social networks, and shared tasks on Facebook their relational satisfaction levels could be maintained.

The practice of positivity refers to "interacting with the partner in a cheerful, optimistic, and uncritical manner" (Canary & Stafford, 1992, p. 243). When practicing positivity on Facebook, individuals in MMRs may have communicated positive comments, exhibited enjoyable interactions, and maintained self-esteem. Military scholars express the importance of spouses of active duty members refraining from troubling the deployed/TDY partner with events from home (APA, 2007; Kim et al., 2005; NMFA, 2004, 2005). While existing literature indicated that positive interaction demonstrated an improvement of relational satisfaction, this study suggests that practicing positivity through Facebook might maintain relational satisfaction. As previous literature suggested, individuals in LDRs maintained their relationship through CMC (Aylor, 2003). The results of this study appear to confirm the previous research in that individuals in MMRs were able to practice positivity in order to maintain their relational satisfaction via Facebook.

Performing assurance suggests that individuals in a relationship are expressing messages of love and affection toward the relationship's future (Canary & Stafford, 1992). Results indicated that individuals in MMRs who practiced assurance on Facebook experienced greater levels of relational satisfaction. The existing literature emphasized the stress of deployment on individuals in MMRs (Faber et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2005). The results fully support that even when uncertainty emerges during a deployment situation, an increase in messages of assurance may maintain relational satisfaction.

Practicing social networks refers to the interaction with mutual friends/affiliations and family (Canary & Stafford, 1992). Despite physical separation, individuals in MMRs revealed that practicing social network was important when maintaining relational satisfaction. With Facebook as the medium, individuals in MMRs' communication with mutual friends and family can be an important aspect during deployment or separation. Literature highlights that having a support system, which can be associated with the individuals in the MMR, during a time of separation can enhance relationship satisfaction (NFMA, 2004, 2005). Having friend/family support and contact with other families who are deployed with their active duty spouse increased the individuals in MMRs ability to deal with the deployment (NFMA, 2004). For this study, since Facebook is the medium of practicing social networks, individuals in MMRs might have revealed that they are having direct contact with family and friends who are reinforcing their relationship with their spouse.

As found in previous studies, shared tasks were reported being practiced by individuals in LDRs (Kim et al., 2005). Practicing shared tasks in a FtF setting is defined

by performing responsibilities together including work and duties around the household (Canary & Stafford, 1992). The results suggest that shared tasks do not require FtF contact, but through the use of mediated communication individuals in MMRs have the ability to accomplish and manage the daily tasks and responsibilities that are performed when the couple is together. Results may have revealed that individuals in MMRs used Facebook to practice shared tasks as much as individuals in LDRs were found to accomplish through mediated communication (e.g., Internet, telephone, and letters) (Dainton & Aylor, 2002).

The results indicated that practicing openness on Facebook did not reveal a significant increase in relational satisfaction. The practice of openness involves disclosing information about the quality of the relationship, desires for the relationship, and decisions made about the relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992). Even though existing LDR literature stresses the importance of practicing openness (Aylor, 2003), the results revealed in this study are contradictory. It should be noted that Facebook is a medium that suggests communication is revealed to a public environment (seen to all those who are permitted by the user). Therefore, individuals in MMRs are affirming that they may be refraining from engaging in discussing their personal relationship on Facebook for all users to see.

Well-Being. The results regarding the relational maintenance strategies practiced on Facebook and well-being were not fully supported. Individuals in MMRs reported that practicing positivity, assurance, social networks, and shared tasks in their relationship did not affect their depression, anxiety, and stress during deployment/TDY. However,

findings revealed that when individuals in MMRs practiced openness, an inverse relationship with stress emerged. As individuals in MMRs reported, practicing more openness on Facebook, the quality of their well-being went down where stress levels were causing more harm to their health. Although, the results were not fully supported they offer an interesting assessment of the effects of relational maintenance on well-being for individuals in MMRs who interact on Facebook.

When individuals in MMRs practiced the relational maintenance strategy of openness, results revealed a significant and inverse relationship with stress. The more individuals in MMRs practiced openness, negative stress levels were reported, perhaps indicating that the quality of their well-being was deteriorating. As noted earlier, Facebook is a medium where "friends" can view status updates, conversations with other friends, and interact with one another on their individual profiles by commenting, sharing photos, and engaging in personal discussions (Facebook, 2013). Therefore, individuals may be affirming that the more open the individuals are about their MMR, the more negative stress levels rise. As previously revealed, results regarding practicing openness did not increase levels of relational satisfaction. In the case of well-being, as individuals in MMRs were more open on Facebook the chance of stress increased. Previous literature suggests that spouses should refrain from disclosing relational information to avoid unnecessary stressors for the active duty spouse (APA, 2007). These results support this literature and confirm that while on Facebook individuals in MMRs might avoid communicating about relationship decisions and desires.

Even though the results revealed no significant relationship between practicing

positivity on Facebook and depression, the results were in the direction predicted. As Verdeli et al. (2006) discussed, the psychological impact of separation on individuals in MMRs increases depression. However, as the results show, when practicing positivity on Facebook, depression for individuals in MMRs failed to reveal a negative relationship. Defined as the change that interrupts a normal day occurrence (Karren et al., 2006), depression can be attributed to the dialectical tensions that occur in a relationship (Baxter & Simon, 1993). However, because of Facebook, the medium to communicate with a spouse is found to sustain well-being and allow the individuals in the MMR to interact with positive behaviors.

The results failed to reveal a relationship between the relational maintenance strategy of assurance and depression; however, the results were also in the direction predicted. Verdeli et al. (2006) emphasized the amount of strain spouses experience when adjusting to a separation. This period of adjustment highlights a dialectical tension that individuals in MMRs experience, transitioning from being together to being separated (Baxter & Simon, 1993). With Facebook, the results reveal how individuals in MMRs have the ability to sustain their well-being by sending messages of love and affection towards their relationship with their spouse.

When individuals in MMRs practice the relational maintenance strategy of social network on Facebook, although results failed to reveal a relationship, depression, anxiety, and stress associations were in the direction predicted. When active duty spouses are called for deployment or TDY, uncertainty tends to rise in the MMR (Warner et al., 2009). The uncertainty and decrease in the amount of communication that is experienced

can produce stress (Karren et al., 2006). The continuous amount of worrying due to the ambiguity associated with a TDY and even more so with a deployment, results in anxiety (Bell & Schumm, 1999; Burrell et al., 2006; deBurgh et al., 2011; Padden et al., 2011). And finally, as discussed above, spouses are susceptible to experiencing depression because they experience a lack of interaction with their partner (Faber et al., 2008). This study sought to reveal that through the practice of relational maintenance strategies on Facebook, more positive levels of well-being would be found. Although none of the relationships were significant, practicing social network on Facebook yielded the most interesting assessment as it directed depression, anxiety, and stress to a more positive level. As the literature highlighted above, having a support system can enhance relational satisfaction (NFMA, 2004, 2005). Facebook offers a medium to connect, communicate, and maintain relationships with friends *and* family (Facebook, 2013). Facebook may give individuals in MMRs the ability to tolerate the distance with their partner and allows them to engage in the relational maintenance strategy of social network to communicate with friends and family (Baym, 2006). This form of technology is a fundamental tool for communication and could prove to potentially maintain well-being for individuals in MMRs that undergo separation.

Dialectical tensions become apparent when individuals in MMRs undergo change that occurs when a separation approaches (Baxter & Simon, 1993). In order to manage these tensions and avoid relational dissatisfaction and negative levels of well-being, individuals in MMRs might consider practicing the relational maintenance strategies explored in this study. As this study sought to examine, practicing relational maintenance

strategies on Facebook can lead to greater relational satisfaction for individuals in MMRs.

Post Hoc Analysis. In the post hoc analysis, the findings between relational satisfaction and well-being indicated a significant relationship. When individuals in MMRs reported greater levels of relational satisfaction their well-being dimensions of depression and stress produced more positive levels. This positive correlation suggests that as relational satisfaction is being maintained an individual's well-being becomes more positive and tolerable during separation. This study uncovered that the use of relational maintenance strategies on Facebook led to greater relational satisfaction, but did not result in more positive levels of well-being. However, this post hoc analysis revealed that when individuals are performing relational maintenance strategies to maintain their relationship the well-being of the individuals in the MMR produces more positive levels. This relationship suggests that when relational satisfaction is being maintained an individual's well-being is stable. The relationship identifies that by performing positivity, assurance, social networks, and shared tasks relational satisfaction will affect the individuals' well-being.

Practical Implications

From a communication perspective, this study offers individuals in MMRs advice on maintaining their relational satisfaction. Based on the results, participants reported higher levels of relational satisfaction when they practiced relational maintenance strategies on Facebook. When individuals in MMRs are experiencing dialectical tensions that become evident during a separation, Facebook can help individuals adapt and offer a

medium to practice positivity, assurance, social networks, and shared tasks with their partner.

During a time of separation, individuals in MMRs might consider practicing relational maintenance strategies while on Facebook to maintain relational satisfaction. In a practical sense, when practicing positivity, individuals in the MMR should keep messages optimistic and cheerful. Refraining from negative thoughts and conversations that could potentially affect the well-being of the partner will likely lead to greater relational satisfaction. Sharing messages of love and affection will ensure both individuals in the MMR that the quality of the relationship is satisfactory. For individuals in MMRs who have family and friends on Facebook, interacting with that support system will improve the quality of the MMR (NFMA, 2004, 2005). Finally, when practicing shared tasks on Facebook, individuals in MMRs might consider performing daily tasks together, such as acknowledging the conversations or interactions that take place on Facebook. Examples of shared tasks on Facebook may include acknowledging and interacting in conversations between mutual friends of family and between the couple. Individuals in MMRs may manage shared tasks by fulfilling the purpose or desire that the conversation originally anticipated. This study offers individuals in MMRs and those who support the relationship practical information for maintaining and increasing levels of relational satisfaction during the difficult separation of deployment or TDY.

Limitations

Even though this study offers a unique approach to an understudied population within the medium of Facebook, there are limitations to this study. The first and obvious

limitation to this study was the small sample size. For this study, a larger sample size could have been achieved by distributing the survey to a larger audience. The use of snowball sampling limited the participants to family friends, coworkers, and the researcher's friends, which restricted the diversity of the sample. Reaching out to the university's ROTC program and directly contacting high ranking officers in the various branches of the military could have expanded the sample size and may have helped to avoid the homogenous sample analyzed in this study. Other means of increasing the sample size may have included distributing the survey for a longer time period. Also, the use of snowball sampling results in a delay between when the survey is submitted and when respondents complete the survey.

Although the sample size for this study was not ideal, previous studies have indicated that this specific population would be unique for two reasons. First, there is limited scholarship regarding individuals in MMRs. Second, the available research on how individuals in MMRs utilize Facebook is also lacking. Therefore, this study is best showcased as a study that attempts to bridge two understudied areas (Dainton & Aylor, 2002; Faber et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2005). Secondly, individuals in MMRs have not been extensively researched in communication. Therefore, this study should be viewed as a preliminary step to gauge future research concerning Facebook as a mechanism to practice relational maintenance strategies during deployment or TDY.

The next limitation considers the missing elements not identified about the sample. The demographic section in the survey failed to question the participants' military ranking. Giving participants the option to classify themselves or their spouse as

enlisted, reserve, or officer may have altered the analysis and suggested another approach to practical implications. The next missing element in the demographic section included the possibility of participants to identify themselves as both spouse and active duty member. As either a spouse or active duty member, individuals who can identify with both classifications may answer the survey questions differently. The participants that fit both descriptions understand the stressors identifiable with being a spouse and active duty member suggesting that results may skew practical implications suggested for couples that only have one active duty member. Finally, the demographic section disregarded the recency of the deployment or TDY at question. Identifying the approximate time since the deployment or TDY or if the participant was presently going through the separation with his or her spouse may have affected the results. Individuals who answered the survey about a deployment that recently ended may have answered differently than those individuals who were currently on deployment. This may suggest that the separation may resonate with the individuals in MMRs and affect their present actions on Facebook.

The final limitation identifies that although appropriate for this study the use of relational dialectics in a quantitative approach is far removed from its origins and therefore carries criticism. Dialectics scholars Baxter and Montgomery (1996) contend that the use of quantitative analysis fails to recognize the text that critically enriches the dialogue. They agree that in order to inquire about personal relationships the domination of dialogue enhances the understanding of social interaction. Although a quantitative approach results in generalizable findings, the use of dialectics in this study brushed the surface of acknowledging the influence of tensions that arise. Regardless, the complexity

of interpersonal relationships is apparent to both qualitative and quantitative scholars alike (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Future Research

Although this study revealed interesting findings, future research should yield a larger sample size. Since the study provides a great wealth of information on how practicing relational maintenance strategies on Facebook increases relational satisfaction, future studies should focus on the well-being of individuals in MMRs. One way to explore this area would be to concentrate on how the geographical location of separation affects well-being. The type of separation may be a contributing factor to how individuals in MMRs practice relational maintenance strategies on Facebook.

While considering a larger sample size, future research might aim to only sample spouses of active duty members in order to investigate how they use Facebook, not just for relational maintenance but also as a means of support during a deployment/TDY. If feasible, researchers might reach out to the active duty members and investigate how having access to Facebook during deployment hindered or eased separation for their spouse. It might also be of interest to research the population in which gender roles are reversed, where the active duty members are primarily female and the spouses are male. The current study did not identify whether both individuals in the MMR completed the survey. However, future research might assess how both individuals in the MMR can affect the current results and if gender roles are reversed. Knowing the dyadic relationship fully by surveying both individuals in the MMR may have added significant practical implications to how the individuals in the MMRs performed the relational

maintenance strategies together to maintain relational satisfaction.

Research focusing on individuals in MMRs can contribute practical implications for this population when undergoing a separation due to military duty. Future research would benefit from exploring how the individuals in MMRs practice each relational maintenance strategy. In order to offer individuals in the MMRs specific actions or messages, future research might utilize interviews or focus groups to identify clear examples on how individuals in MMRs practice relational maintenance strategies.

Another prosperous extension of this study would be to compare how individuals in MMRs and individuals in LDRs practice relational maintenance on Facebook. Because research is limited on military marriages, this study often compared results to those individuals in LDRs because of their similar separation characteristics. However, for individuals in MMRs, the amount of time separated and geographical locations could potentially produce different results. By identifying the recency of the deployment or time frame of separation, the results may have altered and this should be considered in future research to help clarify the various situations that may occur: completed deployment or TDY assignment, currently deployed or TDY, year long assignment as opposed to six month assignment, and even identifying whether or not the separation occurred during significant life events or holidays. Although LDR research suggests that a prominent channel of communication is mediated communication, future research might take into account how career path, the amount of face-to-face interaction, and geographical location may alter the comparisons between MMRs and LDRs (Dainton & Aylor, 2002).

Individuals in MMRs experience a wide range of stressors throughout a separation experience, whether it is a TDY or deployment. However, through this study, it was revealed that the medium of Facebook could offer these individuals a channel to maintain their relationship. Continuing research regarding the use of Facebook with individuals in MMRs would give this population hope for maintaining resiliency during times of deployment.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Letter

Participant,

My name is Colleen Dungey. I am studying for my Masters in Communication, Technology and Society at Clemson University. I am working towards my master's thesis and researching the significance social media, more specifically Facebook, has on individuals in military marital relationships.

For all of my life I have grown up and around the military lifestyle and my background has greatly influenced my research interests. Furthermore, with the rise in social media and its' ability to connect individuals from all over the world, I wanted to combine my two interests and see how it benefited individuals in military marital relationships.

I have composed a series of questions to guide my research. And below is a link to a survey I have created. You have received this survey because you are a qualified candidate being either an active duty member or a spouse of an active duty member, and your participation is greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate in this survey your responses are confidential and will be kept anonymous. They will be only used for the aggregation of data. While your participation is greatly appreciated, you may withdraw from the survey at any time.

As a daughter of a retired Major in the Air Force, I have found it astonishing on how the military lifestyle is "such a small world". With that being said upon completing the survey, I would very much appreciate your help by forwarding this e-mail/survey, along with this text to individuals in military marital relationships that you know, including your spouse. Alternatively, you may give my information to those military families to contact me regarding the survey. Thank you again for your participation.

If you have any questions please contact me, Colleen Dungey at dungey@clemson.edu. Again, thank you for your participation.

Thank you,
Colleen Dungey

dungey@clemson.edu

Appendix B: Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Joseph Mazer and Colleen Dungey of Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to examine the role Facebook plays as the process of relational maintenance for individuals in military marital relationships when they are separated.

Your participation will involve completing a survey. It is anticipated that the amount of time required for your participation will be less than 20 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts:
There are minimal risks involved in this study. If you volunteer information, your responses will be anonymous.

Protection of Anonymity and Confidentiality:
Your responses will be private. To maintain anonymity/confidentiality, only the researchers will be allowed access to the data. The survey will not ask you for information that can be used to identify you individually. If you volunteer information, your responses will be anonymous. If you contact or provide identifying information, your identity will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this survey your responses are confidential and will be kept anonymous. You may choose not to participate and may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. Should you decide not participate or withdraw you will not be penalized in any way. You are not required to answer every question. If you wish to skip a question, simply click next and move on to the next question.

Contact Information:
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact the Principal Investigator, Joseph Mazer, at jmazer@clemson.edu or 864-656-5254. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu.

Demonstration of Informed Consent:
Thank you for considering participation in this study. By proceeding to the survey, you confirm that you have read the above information and voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Appendix C: Online Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

Directions: For the following questions, please select or write the most appropriate response.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your biological sex?
    a. Male
    b. Female
3. Are you Active Duty or a Spouse of an Active Duty Member?
4. What branch of the military are you affiliated with?
    a. Air Force
    b. Army
    c. Navy
    d. Marines
    e. Coast Guard
5. Was the most recent separation from your spouse due to an extended temporary duty (TDY) or deployment?
    a. Extended TDY
    b. Deployment
6. What was the extended TDY or deployed location:
    a. CONUS (con. U.S.)
    b. CENTCOM (south west Asia, middle east)

c. EUCOM (europe & Israel, and part of Russia)

d. PACOM (china, pacific, Australia)

e. SOUTHCOM (south America)

f. AFRICACOM

g. Other

7. How long have you been a member of Facebook?

Relational Maintenance Strategies Measure (RMSM)- Measures relational maintenance strategies used on Facebook.

Directions: Please think the most recent extended TDY or deployment. As think of how you and your spouse communicated through **Facebook** during this time of separation. For each item, please select the number that best represents your level of agreement while using Facebook using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Positivity

1. Attempt to make our interactions very enjoyable
2. Am cooperative in the ways I handle disagreements between us.
3. Try to build up his/her self-esteem, including giving him/her compliments, etc.
4. Ask how his/her day has gone.
5. Am very nice, courteous, and polite when we talk.

6. Act cheerful and positive when with him/her.
7. Do not criticize him/her.
8. Try to be romantic, fun, and interesting with him/her.
9. Am patient and forgiving of him/her.
10. Present myself as cheerful and optimistic.

Openness

11. Encourage him/her to disclose thoughts and feels to me.
12. Simply tell him/her how I feel about relationships.
13. Seek to discuss the quality of our relationship.
14. Disclose what I need or want from our relationship.
15. Remind him/her about relationship decisions we made in the past (for example, to maintain the same level of intimacy).
16. Like to have periodic talks about our relationship.

Assurances

17. Stress my commitment to him/her.
18. Imply that our relationship has a future.
19. Show my love for him/her.
20. Show myself to be faithful to him/her.

Network.

21. Like to spend time with our same friends.
22. Focus on common friends and affiliations.
23. Show that I am willing to do things with his/her friends or family.

24. Include our friends or family in our activities.

Task

25. Help equally with tasks that need to be done.

26. Share in the joint responsibilities that face us.

27. Do my fair share of the work we have to do.

28. Do not shirk my duties.

29. Perform my household responsibilities.

ENRICH Martial Satisfaction (EMS)

Directions: Please think the most recent extended TDY or deployment. Please think of your relationship with your spouse during this time of separation. For each item, please select the number that best represents your level of agreement during that separation using the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. My partner and I understand each other perfectly.
2. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner.
3. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.
4. My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.
5. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.

6. Our relationship is a perfect success.
7. I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.
8. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.
9. I have some needs that are not being met by our relationship.
10. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.
11. I am very pleased about how we express affection and relate sexually.
12. I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents.
13. I have never regretted my relationship with my partner, not even for a moment.
14. I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-law, and/or friends.
15. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.

DASS (Shorter version 21 q's- will measure frequency of symptoms that are associated with general well-being).

Directions: Please think the most recent extended TDY or deployment. The following statements will assess your health. Please read each statement and select the number that indicates how much the statement applied to <u>you</u> over that time of separation.

Did not apply to me at all	Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time	Applied to me to a considerable degree, or good part of time	Applied to me very much, or most of the time
0	1	2	3

1. I found it hard to 'wind down'
2. I was aware of dryness of my mouth.

3. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all.
4. I experiences breathing difficult (e.g., excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion).
5. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.
6. I tended to over-react to situations.
7. I experienced trembling (e.g. in the hands).
8. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy.
9. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself.
10. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to.
11. I found myself getting agitated.
12. I found it difficult to relax.
13. I down-hearted and blue.
14. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing.
15. I felt I was close to panic.
16. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything.
17. I felt I wasn't worth much as a person.
18. I felt that I was rather touchy.
19. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g. sense of heart rate increase, heart 'missing a beat').
20. I felt scared without any good reason.
21. I felt that life meaningless.

REFERENCES

Altman, I. (1993). Dialectics physical environments, and personal relationships. *Communication Monographs, 60*, 26-34.

Aylor, B. A. (2003). Maintaining long-distance relationships. In D.J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.). *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations* (pp. 127- 139). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

American Psychological Association. (2007). *The psychological needs of U.S. military service members and their families: A preliminary report.* Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pubs/info/reports/military-deployment-summary.pdf

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.) Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bargh, J. A., & McKenna, K. Y. A. (2004). The internet and social life. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55,* 573-590.

Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1998). A guide to dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships. In B. M. Montgomery & L. A. Baxter (Eds.), *Dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships* (pp. 1-15). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). *Relating: Dialogues and dialectics.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (2000). Rethinking communication in personal relationships from a dialectical perspective. In K. Dindia & S. Duck (Eds.), *Communication and personal relationships* (pp. 31-53). West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Baxter, L. A., & Simon, E. P (1993). Relationship maintenance strategies and dialectical contradictions in personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10*, 225-242.

Baym, N. K. (2006). Interpersonal life online. In Lievrouw, L.A., & Linvingstone, S. (Eds.), *The handbook of new media: Updated student edition* (pp. 35-540. Thousand Oaks, CA: Published.

Baym, N. K. (2010). *Personal connections in the digital age.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Braithwaite, D. O., Waldron, V. R., & Finn, J. (1999). Communication of social support in computer-mediated groups for people with disabilities. *Health Communication, 11*, 123-151.

Bell, D. B., & Schumm, W. R. (1999). Family adaption to deployments. In P. McClure (Ed.), *Pathways to the future: A review of military family research* (pp. 109-118). Scranton, PA: Marywood University, Military Family Institute.

Bell, D. B., Schumm, W. R., Knott, B., & Ender, M. G. (1999). The desert fax: A research note on calling home from Somalia. *Armed Forces & Society, 25*, 509-521.

Bey, D. B., & Lange, J. (1974). Waiting wives: Women under stress. *The American Journal of Psychiatry, 131*(3), 283-286.

Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Briley Durand, D., Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military lifestyle demands on well-being, army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society, 33*(1), 43-58.

Burton, N. (2012). Military divorce: What it's like to split from your military spouse. Retrieved on July 9, 2012 from huffingtonpost.com.

Canary, D. J., & Dainton, M. (2003). *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Canary, D. J., Dainton, M. (2006). Maintaining relationships. In A. L. Vangelisti & D. Perlman (Eds.), *The cambridge handbook personal relationships* (pp. 727-743). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (1992). Relational maintenance strategies and equity in marriage. *Communication Monographs, 59*, 243-267.

Canary, D. J, Stafford, L., Hause, K. S., & Wallace, L. A. (1993). An inductive analysis of relational maintenance strategies and relational characteristics. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*, 395-406.

Chang, S. (2003). Communication Technologies and Long-Distance Romantic Relationships. Conference Papers -- International Communication Association, 1-31.

Clark, N., Lee, S.-Y., & Boyer, L. (2007, May). *A place of their own: An exploratory study of college students' use of facebook.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA.

Cozza, S. J., Chun, R. S., & Polo, J. A. (2005). Military families and children during operation iraqi freedom. *Psychiatric Quarterly, 76*(4), 371-378.

Craig, E., & Wright, K. B. (2012). Computer-mediated relational development and maintenance on Facebook®. *Communication Research Reports, 29*(2), 119-129.

Dainton, M., & Aylor, B. (2001). A relational uncertainty analysis of jealousy, trust, and maintenance in long-distance versus geographically close relationships. *Communication Quarterly, 49*, 172-188.

Dainton, M., & Aylor, B. (2002). Patterns of communication channel use in the maintenance of long-distance relationships. *Communication Research Reports, 19*(2), 118-129.

de Burgh, H. T., White, C. J., Fear, N. T., & Iversen, A. C. (2011). The impact of deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan on partners and wives of military personnel. *International Review of Psychiatry, 23*, 192-200.

Dindia, K. (2003). Definitions and perspectives on relational maintenance communication. In D. J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations* (pp. 1-28). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Dindia, K. (2000). Relational maintenance. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 287-299). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Dindia, K., & Baxter, L. A. (1987). Strategies for maintaining and repairing martial relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 4*, 143-158.

Dindia, K., Canary, D. J. (1993). Definitions and theoretical perspectives on maintain relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10*, 163-173.

Drummet, A. R., Coleman M., & Cable, S. (2003). Military families under stress: Implications for family life education. *Family Relations*, *52*, 279-287.

Eichhorn, K. C., Thomas-Maddox, C., & Wanzer, M. B. (2008). *Interpersonal communication: Building rewarding relationships*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*, 1143-1168.

Faber, A.J., & Willerton E., & Clymer S.R., & MacDermid S.M., & Weiss, H.M. (2008). Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *22*(2), 222-230.

Facebook (2013). *Newsroom*. http://newsroom.fb.com

Faulkner, R. A., Davey, M., & Davey, A. (2005). Gender-related predictors of change in marital satisfaction and marital conflict. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 33*, 61-83.

Fitzpatrick, M. A., & Badzinski, D. M. (1994). All in the family: Interpersonal communication in kin relationships. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 726-777). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fournier, D. G., Olson, D. H., & Druckman, J. M. (1983). Assessing marital and premarital relationships: The PREPARE-ENRICH inventories. In E. E. Filsinger (Ed.), *Marriage and family assessment* (pp. 229-250). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing.

Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology, 7*(2), 176-185.

Gerstel, N., & Gross, H. (1984). *Commuter Marriage.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Gerstel, N., & Gross, H. (1983). Commuter marriage: Couples who live apart. In E. D. Macklin & R. H. Rubin (Eds.), *Contemporary families and alternative lifestyles* (pp. 180-193). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Gimbel, C., & Booth, A. (1994). Why does military combat experience adversely affect martial relations? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 56*, 691-703.

Gulder, G. T. (1992). *Propinquity and dating relationships*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.

Henry, J. D., & Crawford, J. R. (2005). The short-form version of the depression anxiety stress scales (DASS-21): Construct validity and normative data in a large non-clinical sample. *The British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 44*, 227-239.

Johnson, A., Haigh, M. M., Becker, J. H., Craig, E. A., & Wigley, S. (2008). College students' use of relational management strategies in email in long-distance and geographically close relationships. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*, 381-404.

Karren, K. J., Hafen, B. Q., Smith, N. L., & Frandsen, K. J. (2006). *Mind/Body health: The effects of attitudes, emotions, and relationships* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Pearson Education as Benjamin Cummings.

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K. McCarthy, I. P., Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons, 54*, 241-251.

Kim, I., Kawamura, A., Jerney-Davis, M., Kim, R., Raphael, D., & Lau, J. (2005). Relational maintenance during deployment: Communication between spouses. Conference Papers -- International Communication Association, 1-21.

Kuhn, T. S. (1977). *The essential tension: Selected studies in scientific tradition and change.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lindquist, J. H. (2007). A comparison of civilian and enlisted divorce rates during the early all volunteer force era. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 35*(2), 199-217.

Lovibond, S. H., & Lovibond, P. F. (1995). *Manual for the depression anxiety stress scales.* Sydney: Psychology Foundation.

Mansson, D. H., & Myers, S. A. (2011). An initial examination of college students' expressions of affection through facebook. *Southern Communication Journal, 76* (2), 155-168.

Merolla, A. J. (2010a). Relational maintenance and noncopresence reconsidered: Conceptualizing geographic separation in close relationships. *Communication Theory, 20*, 169-193.

Merolla, A. J. (2010b). Relational Maintenance during military deployment: Perspectives of wives of deployed us soldiers. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *38*(1), 4-26.

McLeland, K. C., Sutton, G. W., Schumm, W. R. (2008). Martial satisfaction before and after deployments associated with the global war on terror. *Psychological Reports, 103*, 836-844.

Miles, D. (2008). Service programs strive to strengthen military marriages, curb divorce. Retrieved June 14, 2012, from defense.gov.

Miller, K. (2005). *Communication theories: Perspectives, processes, and contexts* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Montgomery, B. M. (1993). Relationship maintenance versus relationship change: A dialectical dilemma. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10*, 205-223.

Montgomery, B. M., & Baxter, L. A. (1998). Dialogism and relational dialectics. In B. M. Montgomery & L. A. Baxter (Eds), *Dialectical approaches to studying personal relationships* (pp. 155-183). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

National Military Family Association. (2004). *Serving the home front:* An Analysis of Military Family Support from September 11, 2001 through March 31, 2004. Retrieved May 4, 2012, from http://www.militaryfamily.org/assets/pdf/Serving-the-Homefront-Report.pdf

National Military Family Association. (2005). *Report on the cycles of deployment: An analysis of survey responses from april through September, 2005.* Retrieved May 4, 2012, from http://www.militaryfamily.org/assets/pdf/NMFACyclesofDeployment9.pdf

Noller, P., & Feeney, J. A. (2002). Communication, relationship concerns, and satisfaction in early marriages. In A. L. Vangelisti, H. T. Reis, & M. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Stability and Change in Relationships* (pp. 129-155). Cambridge, UK: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

Padden, D. L., Conners, R. A., & Agazio, J. G. (2011). Stress, coping, and well-being in military spouses during deployment separation. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 33*(2), 247-267.

Rabby, M. K., & Walther, J. (2003). Computer-mediated communication effects on relational formation and maintenance. In D. J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations* (pp. 141–162). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Rawlins, W. K. (1992). *Friendship matters: Communication, dialectics, and the life course*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Regan, P. (2011). *Close relationships.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Rohlfing, M. E. (1995). "Doesn't anybody stay in one place anymore?" An exploration of the under-studied phenomenon of long-distance relationships. In J. T. Wood & S. Duck (Eds.), *Under-studied relationships: Off the beaten track* (pp. 173-196). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sahlstein, E., Maguire, K. C., & Timmerman, L. (2009). Contradictions and praxis contextualized by wartime deployments: Wives' perspectives revealed through relational dialectics. *Communication Monographs, 76*(4), 421-442.

Segal, M. W., & Segal, D. R. (2003). Implications for military families of changes in the armed forces of the united states. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military*. (pp. 225-233). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Segrin, C., & Flora, J. (2001). Perceptions of Relational Histories, Marital Quality, and Loneliness When Communication Is Limited: An Examination of Married Prison Inmates. *Journal of Family Communication*, *1*(3), 151-173.

Schumm, W. R., Bell, D. B., & Gade, P. A. (2000). Effects of a military overseas peacekeeping deployment on martial quality, satisfaction, and stability. *Psychological Reports, 87,* 815-821.

Stafford, L. (2005). *Maintaining long-distance and cross-residential relationships.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Stafford, L., Kline, S. L., & Dimmick, J. (1999). Home e-mail: Relational maintenance and gratification opportunities. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 43*, 659-669.

Stafford, L., & Canary, D. J. (1991). Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender and relational characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 8,* 217-242.

Stafford, L., Dainton, M., & Haas, S. M. (2000). Measuring routine and strategic relational maintenance: Scale revision, sex versus gender roles, and the prediction of relational characteristics. *Communication Monographs, 67*, 306-323.

Turner, L. H., & West, R. (2002). *Perspectives on Family Communication.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Utz, S., & Beukeboom, C. J. (2011). The role of social network sites in romantic relationships: Effects on jealousy and relationship happiness. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 16,* 511-527.

VanderVoort, L., & Duck, S. (2000). Talking about "relationships": Variations on a theme. In K. Dindia & S. Duck (Eds.), *Communication and personal relationships* (pp. 1-12). West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Verdeli, H., Baily, C., Vousoura, E., Belser, A., Singla, D., & Manos, G. (2011). The case for treating depression in military spouses. *Journal of Family Psychology, 25*(4), 488-496.

Warner, C.H., Appenzeller, G. N., Warner, C. M., & Grieger, T. (2009). Psychological effects of deployments on military families. *Psychiatric Annuals, 39*(2), 56-63.

Wright, K. B. (2004). On-line relational maintenance strategies and perceptions of partners within exclusively Internet-based and primarily Internet-based relationships. *Communication Studies*, *55*, 418–432.

Wright, K., Craig, E., Cunningham, C., & Igiel, M. (2007). Emotional support and perceived stress among college students using Facebook.com: An exploration of the relationship between source perceptions and emotional support. Conference Papers -- National Communication Association.